



DISCOURSE

OF

Rev. Mr. CAREY,

ON THE DEATH OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

Preached on the day of his Funeral, April 19th, 1865, in the
First Presbyterian Church in Freeport, Illinois.

CORRESPONDENCE.

FREEPORT, April 19 1865.

REV. I. E. CAREY, DEAR SIR.—Having listened to the discourse delivered by you to-day in the 1st Presbyterian Church of this city upon the death of President Lincoln, with the deepest interest, we take this occasion to request of you a copy for publication if consistent with your views, believing our citizens generally will be gratified by reading it.

D. W. C. Tanner,	L. S. Cowles,
C. L. Currier,	U. D. Meacham,
Robt. Little,	Albert Page,
D. S. Rohrer,	H. C. Burchard,
C. A. Sheetz,	Geo. F. DeForest,
C. K. Judson,	L. L. Munn,

FREEPORT, April 21st 1865.

To D. W. C. Tanner, Chas. L. Currier,
Robt. Little, C. K. Judson and others

GENTLEMEN:—I was taken with surprise by your request for a copy of my discourse preached on the 19th inst. for publication, since it was preached only after a very hasty preparation and expressed but very imperfectly my estimation of this great and good man who has fallen. Relying however upon your judgment and hoping

some who did not hear it may be gratified by the perusal of it, I will endeavor to prepare a copy for publication.

Very Truly Yours,
ISAAC E. CAREY.

As appropriate to the remarks which I propose now to make, I have selected the following words from Prov. 10, 7:

“The memory of the just is blessed.”

It is very undesirable to be under the necessity of speaking without calm and careful premeditation, especially upon so solemn and memorable an occasion as this; but as this necessity was laid upon me last Sabbath morning, so now again to-day. Gladly would I be exempted from the duty which now unexpectedly devolves upon me; but at the same time I am not unconscious of a feeling of happiness in being permitted to stand up before you once more and speak, though but imperfectly and unworthily, of our beloved and lamented Chief Magistrate.

On reviewing in a calmer mood the remarks made in this place last Sabbath morning, I find myself unwilling to take back or modify the strong language then used or the sentiments then expressed. I

still believe that the atrocious crime which has brought such sorrow to our hearts and excited within us such feelings of indignation and horror, has no parallel for unmitigated depravity and pure diabolical malignity in all the annals of history, with the exception of the crucifixion of the Son of God. I still believe that the guilty author of this dark and terrible crime is no other than "that man of sin and son of perdition,"—American Slavery. The fiendish spirit which has animated the rebellion and its leaders from the first, and which was exhibited in the Lawrence massacre, in the Fort Pillow massacre, in the mining of Libby prison, in the plot for burning of New York, and, still more fearfully, in the persistent, barbarous and inhuman treatment of our captive soldiers in the prisons of the South, attained a still more frightful manifestation in the deliberate murder of our honored and beloved President, thus working out its infernal malignity in full revelation, and putting the climax to all the villainies and horrors of which slavery is the author. It is difficult justly to characterize the astounding crime. It is infinitely horrible. And I believe with Dr. Nelson of St. Louis, that the blood of a hundred thousand rebels would not atone for it.

But, not to dwell on the depravity and malignity manifested in this atrocious deed, I judge it more appropriate to this occasion to speak, in the first place of the worth the greatness, the character, of him who has fallen. And in so doing I would speak in praise of Him who made Abraham Lincoln the true man he was, and used him as an instrument in doing a work which only seems the greater and more wonderful the longer we contemplate it. Perhaps I shall seem to some of you to speak extravagantly; but I shall give you my honest, mature and not hastily formed convictions in regard to this most remarkable man.

My first impressions of Mr. Lincoln

were received in 1856, when his fame had not extended far beyond the limits of our State. They were received from his warm friend and intimate acquaintance, Rev. Dr. Smith—at that time his pastor in Springfield, now our Consul in Glasgow—who spoke of him in warm and flowing terms as possessing uncommonly noble qualities of head and heart. He represented him to be a man of excellent character and commanding talents. Nobody at that time dreamed that Abraham Lincoln would ever be President, but it was natural that I should eagerly improve the first opportunity to see and hear the man of whom I had received so favorable an impression. This opportunity was afforded in Peoria on occasion of some political meeting addressed by Mr. Lincoln. My expectations were realized, more than realized. Not only what he said, but his whole appearance impressed me that he was a true man, an extraordinary man, no party tool, no demagogue, but a man who in his words and acts was governed by his convictions of truth and duty. What kindness, sincerity, honesty, benignity, manliness shone forth from every feature of that noble, expressive countenance! Those of you that ever saw and heard him understand what I mean. You believed in the man from the first. You were drawn to him. You were willing to trust him to any extent. You could not doubt him to be worthy of confidence. You went away feeling that he deserved to be called honest Abraham Lincoln.

The *intellect* of Mr. Lincoln was undoubtedly of a very high order. It was as honest and straightforward as the heart of which it was the instrument. It was a clear, penetrating, comprehensive and powerful intellect. It went straight to the core of a subject to which it was applied. I believe that very few men among our statesmen have been more nobly endowed in this respect than was our lamented President. There could hardly be a severer

test of a man's intellectual caliber than that to which he was subjected in being transferred, comparatively inexperienced, from Springfield to Washington, to be associated with the wisest, ablest, greatest statesmen of our nation. But who among his learned and experienced associates but that felt himself obliged to respect the intellect of Abraham Lincoln? This alone, to say nothing of his success in a work of almost unparalleled difficulty, and the marvelous wisdom, sagacity and skill manifested by him in conducting the affairs of the nation amidst the excitements and perils of a long civil war, proves him to have possessed uncommon strength and power of intellect. And I can feel no sympathy with any who may be disposed to speak lightly of his *style* of speaking and writing. It was a true expression of the man who was of the people, and who, before all others, knew how to speak to the people. The truth is that very few men have sufficient strength of intellect and power of concentration to be capable of such a style. Few men are good and great enough to speak as he did. His truthfulness, earnestness, straightforwardness, are expressed in every sentence. How dense, clear, comprehensive and full of meaning his sentences. He could not let himself down to mere rhetorical flourishes and sounding periods. He used words to express his thoughts, and he succeeded in expressing them with great clearness and force. The noble man will long live in his noble utterances.

Think too of his clear *foresight* and *discernment of opportunity*. How wise his reticence at the first and all along. No man ever knew better than he when to speak and when not to speak and what to speak. He was the man to know and to seize the golden opportunity. What wisdom, what comprehension of his work, manifested in his never making great promises, never trusting himself to utter prophecies, never saying too much but just

enough, and never making a full declaration of his purpose till the time came for so doing. He knew his opportunity. He did not take a step till it was time to take it—did not take it to retrace it. He took no backward steps, but from the first moved steadily forward towards the great end, all the while gaining ground and never losing it. Who has not felt that his great act of Emancipation was in just the right time, not a day too early nor a day too late? Two or three years ago, you perhaps thought that you were wiser than Abraham Lincoln—that you knew what he ought to do and when he ought to do it better than he did. But let me ask you if you have not changed your mind? Are you not prepared to say that our lamented President, while doubtless sometimes erring in judgment, being only a man, was on the whole characterized by extraordinary wisdom and foresight?

Rise into a higher region and think of his *moral qualities*—his uprightness, integrity, conscientiousness, his inflexible adherence to his convictions of duty and right. Oh, men and brethren, where among our rulers is one who fully equals him in these respects? He was a truly *humble* man, above pride and vanity; perfectly free from any thing like dash, bravado, bluster, show. Carried up from his law office in Springfield to the highest position on earth, put in command of the greatest armies of modern times and of all the resources of a great nation, conspicuous to all the world by reason of his high office and the unsurpassed grandeur of his work as the leader in the greatest of causes, he seemed unconscious of his elevation, and hardly to think that the eyes of the world were turned upon him, but only of doing the work set to his hands with the utmost fidelity. He was the same kind, genial, approachable, brotherly man in Washington that he had been in Springfield, never during his whole term of office uttering one word or performing one act, indicating

a desire to attract attention and praise to himself or any consciousness that he was rendering great services. The servant of the people, he claimed no reward for the faithful doing of his duty. He affords us an example of a man carried up from a comparatively humble to the highest position, without any *feeling* of exaltation, without any sense of being separated from the great mass of the people, without becoming any less kindly, sympathetic and approachable, than he was before his elevation. Does not this prove true greatness of soul? And think of his noble *magnanimity*. How careful to disclaim merit not belonging to him! How utterly free from all jealousy of his subordinates! How utterly incapable of regarding them as rivals? Without the slightest fear lest he may not be duly appreciated and honored, without a particle of the unmanly rivalry and jealousy which have sometimes worked out in the conduct of our Generals towards each other, the great good man with all his heart joins with the people in honoring the Generals for their noble exploits; nor can he rest till he has told everybody that the plan of the great campaign, which gave us Richmond, did not originate with him at all, but altogether with General Grant, to whom therefore the whole merit of it belongs. And what remarkable *self-mastery and calm self-possession* were his amidst the storm and whirlwind of our great war. Others sometimes in a towering passion, but he never; the whole nation rocked with excitements again and again, but he apparently never excited; others often fearful and despairing, but he always hopeful, cheerful, and standing unflinchingly at the helm, with the firm determination to save the ship and the firm belief that it could be saved. Bitterly opposed by rebel sympathizers in Congress; plotted against by armed conspiracies in the free States; pursued unrelentingly with abuse and detraction by those not worthy to unloose his shoe-latchet; some-

times distrusted, denounced and his ability questioned even by his friends; counselled, on one side, by ignorance and fanaticism, to move faster; warned, on the other side, by pro-slavery conservatism, that he was moving too fast; this man, doubtless sometimes carrying a bleeding heart in his bosom, yet conscious to himself of rectitude and of having done his best to save the nation, patiently and courageously pursued his way, ruling his own spirit, and never, throughout the whole stormy period of his service as President, uttered one word of impatience or complaint or resentment—never one angry, passionate word—hardly a word from which it could be inferred that he had any knowledge of the shameless reproach and abuse of which he was the object or the contempt and hatred with which many regarded him. Was there ever a more striking example of perfect self-mastery?

It is hardly necessary to speak of a thing so manifest as his great *kindness* of heart—an almost womanly tenderness. How very hard for him to sign a death warrant. How hard to say no to one who applied for a favor. Hence doubtless he sometimes yielded when he should not—yielded in things of small importance or only remotely connected with his great work, while he never swerved for a moment from the great end, but pursued it with unyielding firmness and without the shadow of a turning. An extraordinary man, a truly great soul, doubtless, has been taken from us. I loved and revered the man more and more. I never felt such a regard for any other man among our rulers. I have no reverence for mere intellect, learning, eloquence, executive ability, nor for all those qualities in combination; hence I have not a particle of reverence for some who have been regarded the great men of the nation. There is a greater thing than mere power of intellect and will; that greater thing is character, involving essentially reverence for the eternal right, for

the law of God—involving the fear of the Lord; and that greater thing, that crowning glory of a man, Abraham Lincoln possessed. For this reason, above all others, I loved and revered him. He was in the true sense a *God fearing* man. How frequently, how nobly, did he speak from his high seat in honor of the living God. How humbly did he acknowledge that a higher than any human will directed the affairs of the nation, regarding himself as the mere instrument of that will. In speaking of successes with what unaffected humility and faith did he ascribe the glory of them to God in the words, "No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal worked out these great things. They are the precious gifts of the most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, has nevertheless remembered mercy." And what memorable, immortal words are those of his last message, in which he recognizes the justice of God in bringing upon us the war as a punishment for the sin of slavery, and declares that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. The pious heart of the nation was touched by his request to be prayed for as he was leaving his home for, the seat of Government. In the beginning of his work he recognized his dependence on God for all success in the prosecution of it. Doubtless there never lived a man for whom so many earnest prayers were offered. More than than this: he was himself a praying man. I have it on the best authority that he was in the habit of rising in the morning at four o'clock and spending an hour in the study of the scriptures and in prayer. Thus religion appears to our view as the crowning glory of his character. His excellent natural qualities of mind and heart were ennobled and adorned by a sincere and unaffected piety. No wonder the nation loved him—loved him as it never loved another. He was the best and greatest, the greatest because the best, the most loving, the most lovable, the most brother-

ly, the most fatherly man of all our rulers. Who of us but that feels that he has lost in him a dear friend? Alas, never shall we see his like again—never in another the same remarkable combinations of noble qualities. The nation had but one Washington, and it can have but one Abraham Lincoln. How remarkable the affection of the people for this man! What a proof of his real greatness and his uncommon nobleness of nature. Four years ago we regarded him simply as able and trustworthy; after a long trial as severe and searching as any one ever passed through, the man was fully revealed to us: he came forth with such unquestionable proofs of great ability and profound wisdom, and of his fitness for his high position, and with such evidences of extraordinary loveliness and excellence of character and greatness of soul, that we unconsciously yielded him not only our respect but also our love and reverence; and now that he is taken from us, we mourn as for a brother or a father; even many of those who opposed his re-election, feeling a deep and sincere sorrow in view of his untimely death. Certainly this proves one of the greatest triumphs ever achieved. Our lamented President failed, I think, in one thing: He never seemed to comprehend fully the depravity and malice animating the rebellion and its leaders, and hence was perhaps inclined to the extreme of lenity. Dr. Breckenridge of Kentucky, who years ago spoke out so strongly against the policy of conciliation, comprehends it better. Andrew Johnson comprehends it better. But for Mr. Lincoln, with his great, loving, brotherly heart, it was almost too much to believe that the rebel leaders are thoroughly malicious and revengeful, hardly capable of any generous sentiment, or of appreciating generosity and kindness in others. He was himself incapable of a depravity so devilish, and naturally found it hard to believe others capable of it. "With malice towards none,

with charity for all, with firmness in the right;" hoping that those lost to all truly manly noble sentiments might be conciliated and brought back by kindness; believing that the incorrigible might possibly be brought to repentance and reclaimed; believing that none could be guilty of a depravity so deep and damnable as to carry into execution the threats against his life; the noble loving, trusting man went on his way till at last he fell a victim to the hellish malignity which so long and patiently he had labored to subdue by kindness.

Thus I have given you, very hastily and imperfectly, my honest impressions of this remarkable man; good as he was great; great as he was good. Thank God for so shining an example among our statesmen, for so pure a life, for so noble and great a character.

Turn now to contemplate for a moment his death by violence as a *Providential* event. One of the most startling and powerful events in the history of the world, and by far the most powerful in our history as a nation, it is doubtless one of the great master strokes of Providence, a pregnant and germinant event that will send its consequences far down the ages. Think of the peculiar and remarkable combination of circumstances under which it took place—a tumult of joy and thankfulness throughout the land; illuminations, festivities, jubilations everywhere; the great rebel army routed and captured; slavery overthrown; the war virtually ended; the rebel capital at last entered in triumph by the worthy President, to be honored as almost never a man was honored before—not as a conqueror exhibiting the spoils of the vanquished and followed by noble captives in chains, but as the conqueror of an iron, heartless despotism, hailed with a wild outburst of joy by an emancipated race—the poor and long oppressed greeting him with transports of delight as their deliverer and Father, stretching forth their sable

unfettered hands towards him, leaping, dancing and singing around him, and showering benedictions upon his head! Oh, my friends, what a triumph was that! infinitely surpassing in true grandeur and sublimity all the triumphs of all the despots of all the ages! Now how remarkable that the fatal atrocious deed, following so closely upon these events, was perpetrated just four years from the beginning of the war in the storming of Sumter, and on the very day of the ceremonies connected with the raising of the flag upon the battered walls of that Fortress—a sign that the great war was virtually ended. Can we, then, help feeling that the hand of God is revealed most strikingly in the calamitous event? In the contemplation of this remarkable conjuncture of facts, I have the sense of completeness, of a dispensation closed, of a noble work done, of a worthy instrument used till it had served its purpose, and then laid aside because no longer wanted. One of the greatest and most memorable triumphs, in all history, having been achieved, how fitting that the good man and wise leader should die, taking his departure amidst the general joy of a redeemed nation. Immortal till his work was done, all the hate of his enemies being utterly impotent against him till he had fully served the purpose of God, how fitting at last that, with so many and so manifest indications that his work was done, he should be removed from the stage on which he had so worthily and successfully acted the part assigned him.

Abraham Lincoln, noble martyr of liberty, his memory to be cherished evermore in the deepest heart of the nation, his name to breathe forth to all coming generations the fragrance of a manly, noble character and of worthy achievements, his great work in the cause of humanity enshrining him forever in the hearts of the millions of the oppressed in this and other lands, his death rousing a sorrowing in-

dignant nation to the work of extirpating the last vestiges of slavery and rebellion from the soil of the republic, and thus powerfully helping on the good cause—Honest Abraham Lincoln had been honored as few men ever were or will be—honored as the instrument of doing a work which associates him with the world's greatest benefactors; he had fulfilled the purpose for which God raised him up, and he passed off the stage because some different instrument was needed for the full accomplishment of the Divine purpose in the affairs of our nation.

Nor can we fail to notice the hand of God, not only in his death, but also in the preservation of others who with him were devoted to destruction. Of the six assassins, how remarkable that only one did the work assigned him. How remarkable that Mr. Seward was saved from death simply by the wire which had been used in the setting of his fractured jaw-bone. How remarkable too that, with the great and difficult work of reconstruction yet to be done, a man of Southern birth, education and training is suddenly brought to the Presidential chair! Surely in view of such facts we must say, "This is the finger of God." And the hand of God appears not only in the death of the lamented President, but equally in the fact that it was death by *violence*. In the murder of Abraham Lincoln because he was a good and just man, and the highest representative of the cause of freedom and humanity in all the earth, many have noticed a *resemblance* to the death of the innocent holy Redeemer by the hands of wicked men. There is no exact parallel, but there is a manifest resemblance. The same lawless, malignant spirit, which crucified the Son of God, worked out in the murder of our honored President. Now the purpose of God in the death of Jesus Christ would not have been answered at all, if he had died simply by disease. In order that the death of Christ might be full of moving

melting power to all ages and generations; there was a necessity that it should be caused by the depravity of men, thus revealing the terrible nature of human depravity as murderously hostile to holy innocence and righteousness, and being also adapted to excite the deepest indignation against it as malignant and diabolical in its own nature. In like manner, doubtless, God intended deeply, and powerfully to move this nation by the death of Abraham Lincoln. Hence his death by violence. If he had died by disease, we should have felt sorrow, but not indignation. It is not simply the fact of his death, but specially the fact that he was foully murdered by the hand of a cowardly traitor—murdered because he was a good and wise man and the friend of all humanity—murdered because he was so successfully crushing out the rebellion and with it the despotism in which it is grounded—murdered by the infernal malice of slavery—it is *this* which has stirred the heart of the nation as it was never stirred before—stirred it from the deepest depths against the great iniquity of slavery—stirred it not only with sorrow for the irreparable loss, but with the deepest indignation against the terrible evil which is the source of our troubles. This evil is at last fully revealed in its truly fiendish and horrible nature, and we hate it as never before. Thus the death of Abraham Lincoln, caused by slavery, which reached the culmination of its villainies in the astounding crime, is more powerful against wrong and oppression and on the side of freedom and humanity, than was his life; and it is powerful unto all ages. Thus plainly and remarkably does the wisdom of him who is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working, appear in this most afflictive event; and we have an illustration of the truth that God will cause the wrath of man to praise him and restrain the remainder. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church;" and doubtless the blood of this noble martyr

of liberty is the seed of free institutions—seed that shall spring forth in a glorious harvest over the whole continent, and be sown broadcast to spring up and bring forth its excellent and beautiful fruits in other lands and nations.

Notice now, in conclusion, some of the lessons of the mournful event.

1. The frailty of man and the greatness of God.

2. That we have to do with a Ruler greater than the President and a law higher than the Constitution. The President is not the mere creation of the people, but "the minister of God," raised to power to serve a Divine purpose, and removed the moment that purpose is served. God rules in our national affairs, and our duty is entire submission.

3. That God is working out a purpose in our nation. How clearly is that purpose now revealed. How clear that "the righteous

Lord loveth righteousness." How clear that God "executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." Let us be with our whole hearts on God's side, and work earnestly towards the end which he is seeking to accomplish.

4. Our absolute dependence. We owe our successes to our armies, navies, generals, *only* as the instruments which God has used in furthering the great cause of freedom and humanity. "His own right hand and his glorious arm have gotten him the victory." Let us therefore humbly acknowledge our dependence, work earnestly in the direction of his will, and offer up our prayers that he will carry forward his work in our land till all our institutions shall be established in righteousness. Then our highest hopes shall be realized. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."